

Stapleford Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110619
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378130
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Brooker HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Green
Headteacher	Claire Turner
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gillian Scobie

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In total, inspectors observed all classes, including 17 extended lesson observations of nine teachers, some of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including pupils' work, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and evaluated arrangements for safeguarding. Meetings were held with nominated staff, different groups of pupils and representatives from the governing body. No returns were available from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), but inspectors analysed 61 inspection questionnaire responses from parents and carers, 108 from pupils and 22 from staff.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils come from a wide range of heritages, although most are White British. Few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average, and the proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are broadly in line with national figures. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the strategic leadership of senior leaders and managers.

- The school provides an acceptable standard of education for its pupils, but its overall effectiveness is inadequate because senior leaders have not demonstrated the capacity to steer improvement. Senior leaders identify issues and explain weaknesses, but despite taking suitably robust action to address underperformance and recruit high quality staff, there remains too much variability in performance and provision that has not been identified or remedied. Staff have not been sufficiently galvanised to address weaknesses or share the best practice that exists within the school.
- Achievement is satisfactory because pupils generally make the progress expected, often from above average starting points, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. A number of pupils achieve impressively against national standards but overall pupils' progress is uneven, particularly in Key Stage 2. This unevenness is most marked in the progress made by some boys, notably those with special educational needs.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but the quality of learning varies too widely and there is not enough that is consistently good. During the inspection, teaching ranged from outstanding to barely adequate.
- Pupils behave particularly well at break and lunchtimes; they feel safe and are generally very happy. However, although most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave impeccably, parents and carers raised valid concerns about disruption in lessons. The difficult behaviour of a small number of older pupils presents a challenge in some lessons, and it is not effectively or consistently addressed.
- The governing body balances well the need for support and challenge, but their ambition is not implemented by senior leaders. The headteacher provides efficient day-to-day management, but strategic leadership is weak. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, including that of staff, lack

precision and rigour. Although staff work hard, they do not share a vision of excellence and their efforts lack cohesion.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen strategic leadership at all levels by:
 - providing supportive guidance for all staff
 - evaluating more sharply the school's provision, so that best practice is recognised and celebrated, and weaknesses are identified and addressed
 - monitoring rigorously the impact of planned actions and interventions, and analysing the progress and participation of different groups of pupils
 - implementing effective procedures for monitoring the performance of staff, to target support and shape whole-school priorities for improvement.

- Improve teaching so that, by September 2012, most practice is good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that learning always presents suitable levels of challenge for different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
 - planning activities that actively engage all pupils
 - sharing the best practice in managing pupils' behaviour, promoting their independence and nurturing their positive engagement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers say that their children make good progress, particularly in Reception and Key Stage 1, although a few express concern about uneven progress in Key Stage 2. Observations confirm that children make a sound start in Reception and accelerate their progress in Key Stage 1, where attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is generally above the levels expected for seven-year olds. Attainment in Key Stage 2 is also above average, including in reading, with a significant proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in end-of-key-stage tests in English and mathematics. Girls perform particularly well, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. However, the above-average attainment masks the variable progress made by some boys and by some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Although the progress made by specific groups is not significantly below average, their achievement is no better than satisfactory.

The quality of learning seen during the inspection reflects this picture. In general, lessons present work that is suitably challenging so that all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress. A range of programmes, including additional one-to-one and small-group work to boost reading, writing and mathematics provides additional support for pupils in danger of falling behind, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, there is insufficient evidence that these interventions are accelerating pupils' progress and that identified gaps are closing.

Pupils tend to make most rapid progress when working independently, particularly when ambitious outcomes are clearly modelled, and when tasks are skilfully explained and carefully prepared with interesting resources. This was most evident in Reception where children were engaged in a wide range of activities that consolidated their counting and number work, and in Year 1 where pupils were planning the opening of a fantasy story with the help of excellent visual stimulus and the teacher's virtuoso explanation. Elsewhere, however, the pace and evenness of learning are occasionally impeded by over-long or aimless introductions, weak exposition or laboured plenary sessions where questioning involves too few pupils. Skilful teaching uses talk partners and sharply-focused questioning to engage all pupils and sustain a good pace, but strategies to actively involve every pupil, such as using mini-whiteboards to draft and share their ideas, were rarely observed. Over the course of the day, pupils often spend too long listening to the teacher or to their peers instead of having time to develop and review learning for themselves.

Quality of teaching

Most pupils make expected progress in their learning because teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire consider that their children are making good progress; some were fulsome in their praise for teaching, while others were constructively critical. These responses reflect what pupils say about their lessons and are substantiated by the variable quality of teaching observed by inspectors. Currently teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make rapid progress.

The best lessons use assessment information to plan suitably challenging tasks for all pupils, and are lively, engaging and adeptly managed. The most effective teachers skilfully direct the pupils to sustain a rapid pace and ensure that the whole class is fully involved. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, the teacher hooked the pupils' interest by cleverly modelling the work for their own creative writing, and used talk partners and peer assessment to secure pupils' engagement and understanding. Giving the pupils time to work independently also gave the teacher and teaching assistant opportunity to assess pupils' understanding and steer their learning with probing questions. Conversely, in some other lessons teachers rely too heavily on whole-class question and answer sessions to initiate and check learning, and when these are not well structured they only engage a few pupils in the class.

The quality of learning is largely dictated by the pace and focus of lesson starters and plenaries: when teaching is brisk and purposeful the pupils can spend sufficient time working independently or productively in small groups, often using information and communication technology to research or draft and edit work. In Reception, activities are carefully prepared so that children can learn through play and practise their number work and writing in both formal and informal settings. There is a good balance of pupil-initiated and adult-led work, with adults making timely interventions to support learning and assess progress.

Teachers use assessment and marking to guide improvement, but the level of challenge varies, and some work is either too difficult or too easy. Moreover, the school's ambitious target-setting is not closely linked with everyday assessment

because pupils are not routinely told what level they should achieve or their current level of performance. Marking is regular and helpful, but there is too little evidence that pupils understand what they need to do to improve, or that they respond to the guidance given. Like classroom teaching, the impact of additional support given to pupils who are falling behind is variable. When individual or small-group activities are well planned, skilfully directed and carefully assessed, pupils can make accelerated progress, but the pace and focus of this additional support is uneven.

Recent changes to the curriculum have adopted a more creative approach to lesson planning, making imaginative use of resources and developing links between topics so that skills in literacy and numeracy can be consolidated through other areas of learning. Year 6 pupils, for example, could sit and work in their 'Anderson shelter' while crafting their persuasive writing in their history lesson, and Year 2 pupils were looking forward to doing their market research on sweet shops in Cambridge. Wider opportunities, including visits to places of worship and extra-curricular activities, promote well the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school. They particularly enjoy practical work, for example, in art, design and technology, visits and extra-curricular activities. Most pupils behave conspicuously well and have positive attitudes to learning. In the playground during break and lunchtimes, and around the school, pupils interact sensibly and are polite and considerate to one another. Adults and pupils are alert to any problems that might escalate into bullying so that children are confident that occasional incidents of 'name calling' are swiftly dealt with. Harmonious relationships between pupils are fostered to create a positive school climate. In assembly, for example, pupils of all ages behaved impeccably and laughed at the impromptu enactment by two older pupils. In the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils were seen to behave well and work steadily. They sustained their concentration, even when they were expected to listen for extended periods of time. Younger children are particularly eager and are keen to share their ideas and work together.

Parents, carers and pupils are generally positive about behaviour, but some staff and pupils say that a few individuals do not behave consistently well in lessons and are occasionally disrespectful. Some parents, carers and staff also comment that behaviour is managed inconsistently. Although the school has a behaviour policy, its strategies for guiding and supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties have not been effective enough, particularly when teaching is less than good. Occasional low-level disruption rarely affects other pupils, but the management of behaviour tends to be reactive rather than positive, for example, by separating individuals to avert disruption, rather than effectively supporting their learning.

Attendance has declined since the previous inspection and is broadly average.

Leadership and management

One parent echoed the views of others in commenting that 'staff are friendly and approachable', that 'the headteacher has worked well to improve things such as

communication' and that Stapleford is 'a friendly, happy school'. These comments fairly reflect the school's efficient day-to-day management, but do not reflect the weaknesses in strategic leadership. Since the last inspection leaders have not been sufficiently astute or swift in identifying weaknesses or guiding necessary improvement. There has been no significant improvement in the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement and, until recently, there has been a steady decline in attendance. Moreover, parents have raised concerns about pupils' behaviour for some time, but it remains no better than satisfactory. Capacity for further improvement is inadequate because leaders and managers have been ineffective in securing essential improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher's self-evaluation is honest in its appraisal of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, but development planning is not effective because not all planned actions, routine monitoring and summary evaluations are linked closely enough to measurable targets or the impact on pupils' achievement and personal development. There remains too much variability in the quality of teaching and in pupils' progress and attitudes to learning. Routine monitoring, which was a priority from the last inspection, has not led to significant improvement because subsequent planned actions have not been rigorously pursued.

The curriculum is good because staff have worked hard to make it more creative, and to provide broader enrichment opportunities outside the classroom, such as the vegetable garden, 'bike-it' and the 'eco-team'. The impressive range of trips, visiting speakers and activities after school and at lunchtimes contribute well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, in some cases, are beginning to better engage pupils who are at risk of disaffection. Although there is still work to do, the good curriculum is beginning to provide well-organised, imaginative and effective opportunities for learning for all groups of pupils.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have specific areas of expertise that enable them to provide some unusually high-quality support. However, although they are sufficiently knowledgeable to hold the school to account, they express some frustration at the speed of improvement. The governing body, with the headteacher's endorsement, has sensibly sought external support to strengthen leadership.

The school takes suitable steps to ensure that equal opportunity is promoted and that pupils and staff are not subject to discrimination. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stapleford Community Primary School, Cambridge, CB22 5BJ

Thank you for your warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed watching your lessons and hearing what you had to say. You told us about lots of the things you like about school and that you are happy and feel safe. Some of you and your parents also told us about the things that you would like to see improved, including the silly behaviour that disrupts some lessons.

Lots of you achieve high standards and some of you also make good progress in your learning, but we think that you can do even better, particularly in Key Stage 2. Although many of your lessons are interesting and help you to learn a lot, others are not as good. This is because some work could be more challenging or better supported so that you could learn more. We think that there are not enough good or outstanding lessons that fully involve you all and help you to make good progress.

We recognise that staff have worked hard to make some improvements, especially by making curriculum topics interesting, but we think that your school can do a lot better. We have, therefore, given it a 'notice to improve'. We have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to strengthen the way that the school is led and managed. Things must improve quickly within the next 12 months, and inspectors will return to check on the school's progress. We will expect to see consistently good teaching, excellent behaviour in lessons and everyone making good progress in their learning. This will only happen if you all play your part, try hard and take responsibility for the way that you behave.

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector

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